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The Nicaragua Canal and the Monroe Doctrine. By LINDLEY MILLER KEASBEY. New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896.—622 pp.

Professor Keasbey has written a book on an interesting and important question. Between North America and South America lies an isthmus, in many places not over thirty miles wide, which divides the Atlantic from the Pacific, and compels ships coming from the east to make the long and perilous journey around Cape Horn in order to reach the Pacific ports. The idea of connecting the two oceans at this isthmus suggests itself naturally, and plans for a canal were formed almost as soon as the shape of the American continent had been ascertained by discoverers. Under Charles V and Philip II plans were made for cutting through the isthmus a water-way, which, after three centuries, still remains unfinished.

Besides giving a full account of these early attempts, Professor Keasbey shows how one European nation after another has tried to obtain control over some part of Central America. Such efforts have not yielded very important results. Spain has lost the position she once held, and the states which now occupy the isthmus are as ill governed as most of their South American sisters. Professor Keasbey, like many others, views with complacency the idea of our assuming a protectorate over this region, in which lives an ignorant and indolent population under shifting despotisms christened by the name of republics. The wisdom of such a step is at least doubtful. The parent who, in addition to caring for his own large family, insists on assuming responsibility for the acts of all the incorrigible good-for-nothings who live in the neighborhood, may be philanthropic, but he is not well advised.

Great as are the difficulties which attend the construction of a canal through the isthmus, no one can doubt that, sooner or later, communication will be opened between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Possibly the cost will be so large that such an undertaking will not prove to be a commercial success, but it will be as important to civilization as the canal of Suez. Professor Keasbey evidently thinks that the question, when the canal will be constructed, is of less importance than the question, by whom it will be constructed. Many will, however, fail to appreciate the importance of having this work done under the supervision of our own government. In times of peace the ships of all nations will use this means of communication; in times of war no rights will be respected except those that are protected by force. From the Suez Canal the English have reaped the greatest advantage; but this is because they have the largest foreign com-

merce. Since the construction of the canal England has acquired the majority of the stock, but it is hard to see what especial benefit she derives from this; no more English ships pass through the canal because the English government is the largest stockholder. If the possession of a canal in Nicaragua or Panama were important to us in time of war, we could hold it only while we had more ships and stronger ships than our enemy. To suppose that, in case of war with England, a British fleet of ironclads would despondently turn away from a canal guarded by some stray American gunboats, because it had been constructed with American capital or was under the protection of the American government, shows a lack of familiarity with the usages of warfare.

Whether the canal is built by a future de Lesseps or a future Warner Miller, this country will reap the greatest advantage from its construction. Professor Keasbey gives a full account of the long record of failure in the past; but, notwithstanding this, he is justly confident that in the present condition of science and commercial development the completion of a canal will not be long postponed. The work done at Panama has been the only serious attempt at construction, and the failure of that undertaking need not discourage other projectors. Over two hundred and fifty million dollars were spent there, and the canal is far from completion; but as one-third of the amount was stolen, one-third was wasted and only one-third was spent on the work, this does not show that the cost of cutting through the isthmus will necessarily reach an impossible sum. The account of the Panama scheme and of the manipulations, not to say the machinations, of de Lesseps is the most interesting chapter in this book. A few errors have been allowed to creep in, and de Lesseps is made to say that American opposition was due to envy of "*la gloire Française*." The great projector was often wrong in his engineering, and still more often wrong in his facts, but his French was always correct.

JAMES BRECK PERKINS.

ROCHESTER, N. Y.

William Henry Seward. By THORNTON KIRKLAND LOTHROP. (American Statesmen Series.) Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1896. — 436 pp.

The present work should be judged by the purpose with which it was written. It exhibits in a compact and somewhat popular form the life of the person of whom it treats, and his relations to the times